

FOCUS for the community

A Publication for the Residents of Utica Community Schools

From the Superintendent...



by Christine M. Johns, Ed.D.

Education is a major player in Michigan's new economy

We are truly living in a time of transition in Michigan. A report from the Georgetown University Study Center for Education and the Workforce makes it clear that education will be the driving force in reviving and diversifying our state's economy.

The report predicts that by 2018, 62 percent of all jobs in Michigan will require education beyond high school.

It also forecasts that 836,000 new jobs will become available in our state for those with postsecondary credentials.

These eye-opening statistics are why Utica Community Schools is fully committed to the expectation that every child will graduate prepared for college or other higher education.

We understand that a bachelor's degree, associate's degree or a technical or career training certificate will be essential in Michigan's new economy. A college-educated workforce is the only road forward if our state is to attract new businesses and keep its young people here.

As it becomes increasingly clear that a ticket to the 21st Century middle class is more than a high school diploma, you may ask what UCS is doing to prepare students to land those projected 836,000 new jobs.

Consider that today's eighth graders will be the college

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UCS paces county and state in MEAP, MME/ACT

October marked the annual MEAP testing window, when students in grades three through nine take the Michigan Educational Assessment Program tests. Later in the school year, eleventh graders will take the Michigan Merit Exam/American College Test (MME/ACT).

As you will see from the most recently reported test results on page 2, trends indicate steady progress toward the Utica Community Schools Reaching Higher goal that by 2014 every student will meet academic proficiency as defined by national, state and district standards.

Further gains are also seen in the district's ACT composite score, which has steadily risen from 19.7 to 20.4.

Although we are pleased with our students' progress we also know that more must be done.

UCS teachers and administrators remain hard at work analyzing a range

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Reaching Higher everyday!

UCS Lego robotics teams win big at annual ThunderQuest tournament



Cheering their robot to victory are Crissman sixth grader Tori Motloch and fifth grader Robbie Scrivano. Theirs was one of eight Utica Community Schools teams heading to the state championship tournament after taking honors last month at the regional FIRST Lego Robotics ThunderQuest competition. UCS state qualifiers include Beck Centennial Elementary/Shelby Junior High Robo Phoenix, Roberts Elementary/Malow Junior High RoboRovers, Crissman Elementary Chocolate Chunks of Doom, Bemis Junior High, Harvey Elementary Gearheads, Burr Elementary Robodogs, Davis Junior High Cyber Pirates and Crissman Elementary Body Mechanics. UCS teams comprise half the regional participants qualifying for the finals.

UCS teams also captured these judged awards: ThunderChickens Team Spirit – Crissman Elementary Crocodile Munchers, ThunderQuest Playoff Finalists – Bemis Junior High, Innovation and Strategy First Place – Roberts/Malow RoboRovers, Programming First Place – Beck Elementary/Shelby Junior High Robo Phoenix, Programming Second Place – Bemis Junior High, Innovation Solution Second Place – Morgan Elementary Transformers, Presentation First Place – Crissman Body Mechanics, Inspiration Award – Davis Cyber Pirates, Teamwork First Place – Harvey Gearheads, Teamwork Second Place – Malow Medics, Rising Star – Roberts Elementary Royal Rovers, WOW Award – Morgan Transformers.

FIRST Lego Robotics introduces students ages 9-14 to real-world engineering challenges by building LEGO-based robots to complete specific tasks. This year's challenge is "Body Forward." Through the challenge, students will explore biomedical engineering to discover innovative ways to repair injuries, overcome genetic predispositions and maximize the human body's potential.

More Reaching Higher features on page 3

District's strong fiscal practices cited for successful bond refunding, saving taxpayers more than \$1 million

National credit rating agency Standard and Poor's cited Utica Community Schools strong fiscal practices in the face of Michigan's ongoing school funding crisis as helping ensure the stability needed to refund \$15,940,000 in construction bonds previously sold in 1999 and 2001.

Refunding of bonds is similar to refinancing a mortgage. The district was able to take advantage of lower rates to reduce overall interest on the bonds by 6.1 percent, or \$1,008,124. Taxpayers will realize the interest savings over the next five years.

As part of the refunding process, Standard and Poor's reviewed the district's financial position in order to provide a credit rating to potential investors.

The agency granted UCS an "AA" rating, which is more favorable than the State of Michigan's rating and among the highest offered to local school districts.

The high rating is based on the district's stable enrollment trends, low level of debt and strong financial management.

The bonds were used to fund construction projects across the district.

By law, bonds can be used only for facility or equipment improvements and not to pay operating costs such as utilities or staffing.

Visit www.uticak12.org for daily updates on your schools

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Points of Pride

On the 2009-2010 MEAP assessments, 100 percent of the students at nine UCS elementary schools and 90 percent at four UCS junior high schools achieved proficiency in reading and/or mathematics at one or more grade levels.

On the 2010 Michigan Merit Exam, UCS led all 21 Macomb County school districts in mathematics, reading and writing and tied for first in science. UCS also led Macomb County on the ACT composite.

The Merit Exam includes Work Keys, which measure workplace success skills such as applied math, reading for information and other state curriculum items. Of the 2,203 UCS juniors tested in 2010, 91% qualified for a National Career Readiness certificate.

The district's 12 certified mechanics attained a 97.7 pass rate in the 2010 Michigan State Police safety inspection of the UCS fleet of 246 buses.

Adam Rose, a junior at Henry Ford II and the Utica Center for Science and Industry, received the Rising Star Award from the Athletes with Disabilities Hall of Fame. A competitive handcyclist, Rose won his division in this year's Free Press Marathon.

Utica High School's Arrow student newspaper is a national finalist for the prestigious Pacemaker Award from the National Scholastic Press Association and the Newspaper Association of America Foundation.

Districtwide, 56 ninth graders and 135 tenth graders achieved scores of 3 or higher on Advanced Placement exams — the freshmen in World History; the sophomores in U.S. History. Scores of 3, 4 or 5 qualify for credit at many colleges and universities, saving students time and tuition when enrolling.

The College Board honored UCS students for outstanding achievement on multiple AP exams: 57 named AP Scholars for average scores of 3 or higher on three or more exams; 19 named AP Scholars with Honor for averages of 3.25 or higher on all exams and 3 or higher on four or more exams; and 16 named AP Scholars with Distinction for averages of 3.5

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UCS scores top county, state continued from page 1

of student assessment data, including MEAP and MME/ACT results to determine academic weakness and whether classroom instruction is meeting the needs of every child. Test data is also a basis for planning and implementing programs to increase student learning.

UCS continues to focus its resources on effective classroom instruction at every grade level — not just to prepare students for state assessments, but more importantly to ensure their achievement at the next grade level and ultimately, successful completion of state graduation requirements that include geometry, Algebra I and II, biology and chemistry or physics.

Some recent innovations designed to meet these expectations include:

- Established common math and science assessments from sixth grade through high school now used across the district
- Math and science pathways were designed to meet individual student needs
- Academic Blitz, Career Expo, College Fair and Career Focus provide opportunities for students to learn about college and career preparation
- Advanced Placement classes now offered in junior high
- Expanded online learning opportunities
- Pre-ACT tests including PSAT and Explore are given in ninth and tenth grades to help students and parents plan appropriate course selection
- Data management technologies such as PowerSchool and Data Director expand and improve how students' academic progress is monitored.

In the UCS College Culture, we have high expectations for all students and will continue providing the best programs possible to turn their potential into reality.

MICHIGAN EDUCATIONAL ASSESSMENT PROGRAM (MEAP) Percentage of UCS students achieving proficiency:

Grade 3	2007	2008	2009
Reading	91%	92%	95%
Mathematics	95	95	97
Grade 4			
Reading	90	89	91
Mathematics	91	93	96
Grade 5			
Reading	88	88	93
Mathematics	81	84	87
Science	87	91	86
Grade 6			
Reading	90	89	95
Mathematics	81	88	90
Social Studies	80	84	83
Grade 7			
Reading	78	85	88
Mathematics	81	88	89
Grade 8			
Reading	84	84	89
Mathematics	84	84	82
Science	86	83	83
Grade 9			
Social Studies	84	81	79

MICHIGAN MERIT EXAM (MME) Percentage of UCS students achieving proficiency:

Grade 11	2008	2009	2010
Reading			
UCS	71	67	72
Macomb County	61	57	62
Statewide	62	60	65
Writing			
UCS	56	57	51
Macomb County	41	40	40
Statewide	41	43	44
Mathematics			
UCS	61	65	63
Macomb County	46	47	47
Statewide	46	49	50
Science			
UCS	65	66	66
Macomb County	54	53	53
Statewide	57	56	58
Social Studies			
UCS	87	89	83
Macomb County	80	81	77
Statewide	80	81	79

AMERICAN COLLEGE TEST (ACT)

Gr. 11 Composite	2008	2009	2010
UCS	20.3	20.4	20.4
Macomb County	na	18.0	18.8
Statewide	18.8	19.0	19.3

Parents and students can learn more about the ACT from the official Web site, www.act.org.

Individual school reports can be accessed at www.uticak12.org Web site. Pull down the District Information tab, click on MEAP/MME Scores and make your selection.

Staff members garner state, county honors

Schuchard Elementary sixth grade teacher Kathleen Muza was selected as Michigan's state-level finalist in the Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching. Also, Morgan Elementary first grade teacher Kristina Barel and MaryAnn Weingarden, social worker at Monfort, Morgan and Roberts, received "Make A Difference" awards from the Macomb Intermediate School District Parent Advisory Committee. The award is given to educators who make a significant positive impact on the educational experiences of special needs students.

From the Superintendent...

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class of 2018 and current fourth graders will be graduating from high school. Will they and all the 2,000-plus UCS graduates each year be prepared to succeed in post-secondary schooling that will secure their rightful place in the new Michigan?

Our answer is yes. I only need point to our district's Reaching Higher Indicators of Excellence as proof. The real gains in student achievement being produced under these initiatives validate UCS as a major player in Michigan's economic recovery.

Take for example, UCS Indicator 1.22, which states that all tenth and eleventh graders will be proficient and on track to meet the Michigan Merit Curriculum graduation requirements.

When the Merit Curriculum was introduced five years ago calling for credits in geometry, Algebra I and II, biology and chemistry or physics in order to graduate, there was skepticism across the state as to whether every student could succeed.

Our current twelfth graders are the first students required to meet the Merit standards. While our goal is 100 percent by graduation, this group of students has already experienced great success — entering their senior year, 93 percent were on pace to complete the requirements.

UCS is proving that with rigorous, appropriate learning opportunities and teaching methods, every child has the chance to grasp higher level mathematics and science.

The district's latest MEAP and MME/ACT scores, listed on this page, further indicate a steady trend of achievement — so important, because each year in school must be a student's solid step up to the next level.

The UCS College Culture that begins in our elementary classrooms and extends to 28 Advanced Placement (AP) courses in junior high and high school is producing the intended results.

The number of district students taking AP exams has grown by 89 percent since 2006. And last year for the first time, AP opportunities were offered in UCS junior high schools.

As a result, 56 ninth graders scored high enough on the AP World History exam to qualify for credit at many colleges and universities. This class is equal to a college-level course and is traditionally offered to juniors and seniors.

Indeed, our students are reaching higher because rigorous learning opportunities once pursued by a few are now encouraged for all.

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District schools continue to exceed AYP and Education Yes! marks

The nation's public schools are required by the federal No Child Left Behind law to demonstrate state-determined Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in student achievement each year. The latest State of Michigan report indicates all schools in the Utica Community Schools district achieved AYP in 2009-2010.

Standards for attaining AYP differ across the nation. In Michigan, AYP is primarily based on how well students perform on the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) in elementary or junior high school on the Michigan Merit Exam/American College Test (MME/ACT) taken in eleventh grade.

Student scores on the state tests overall including subgroups such as students with disabilities, race/ethnicity, economically disadvantaged and English language learners are factored

into meeting the AYP mark. Schools must also test at least 95 percent of students enrolled and meet attendance or graduation requirements.

Education YES! is Michigan's school accreditation program based on the letter grade system where 90-100=A, 80-89=B, 70-79=C, 60-69=D and below 60=F.

Here again, the MEAP or MME/ACT assessments are the main factors. Two-thirds of the grade is figured on student scores and whether overall achievement is on track to reach 100 percent proficiency by 2014, as required by No Child Left Behind. School-reported results on other state indicators count for the remainder of the grade.

As the chart below indicates, Utica Community Schools has again earned top grades on the state report card.

MICHIGAN SCHOOL REPORT CARD for UCS Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) and Education Yes! Grades

	2008-09 AYP / Grade	2009-10 AYP / Grade
Elementary Schools		
Beacon Tree	Yes / A	Yes / A
Beck Centennial	Yes / A	Yes / A
Browning	Yes / A	Yes / A
Burr	Yes / A	Yes / A
Collins	Yes / A	Yes / A
Crissman	Yes / A	Yes / A
DeKeyser	Yes / A	Yes / A
Dresden	Yes / A	Yes / A
Duncan	Yes / A	Yes / A
Ebeling	Yes / A	Yes / A
Flickinger	Yes / A	Yes / A
Graebner	Yes / A	Yes / A
Harvey	Yes / A	Yes / A
Havel	Yes / A	Yes / A
Magahay	Yes / A	Yes / A
Messmore	Yes / A	Yes / A
Monfort	Yes / A	Yes / A
Oakbrook	Yes / A	Yes / A
Plumbrook	Yes / A	Yes / A
Roberts	Yes / A	Yes / A
Schuchard	Yes / A	Yes / A
Schwarzhoff	Yes / A	Yes / A
Switzer	Yes / A	Yes / A
West Utica	Yes / A	Yes / A
Wiley	Yes / A	Yes / A
Junior High Schools		
Bemis	Yes / A	Yes / A
Davis	Yes / A	Yes / B
Epler	Yes / B	Yes / A
Heritage	Yes / A	Yes / A
Jeannette	Yes / B	Yes / B
Malow	Yes / A	Yes / A
Shelby	Yes / A	Yes / A
Senior High Schools		
Eisenhower	Yes / A	Yes / A
Henry Ford II	Yes / B	Yes / A
Stevenson	Yes / B	Yes / B
Utica	Yes / B	Yes / B
Utica Community Schools AYP	Yes	Yes

Reaching Higher in UCS! continued from page 1

Fifth grade debate



What issues are on the minds of ten-year-olds? The depth of their opinions might surprise you.

At Morgan Elementary, candidates for fifth grade president recently debated topics ranging from tax cuts and the environment to extra recess, second chances on homework and whether students should wear hats in school.

The event was part of an extensive study of American democracy and the major U.S. political parties. The unit included primary elections from which candidates Eamonn Thomas, Dante Candela and Anna Davies (above) emerged. The debate in front of classmates and teachers allowed the candidates to appeal to their electorate before the class election held Nov. 16.

One candidate favored establishing a fifth grade garden and emailing homework to protect the environment. Another believes pizza party incentives would encourage students to recycle. A third offered that "problems are only solutions waiting to happen."

When the votes were counted, teacher Angelo Harwood noted that for the first time in the seven years his students have held elections, the Independent party candidate was victorious.

Utica Center for Science and Industry adds a junior class

Now in its third year, the Utica Center for Science and Industry (UCSI) is taking its program to a whole new level. A junior class has been added, bringing enrollment to 220 in a setting that links learning with the workplace and students' career interests.

Initially funded through a federal grant, UCSI encompasses three areas of study: Engineering Technology, Mechatronics (engineering disciplines for complex robotic devices) and Multi-Media Technology. Students spend half their school



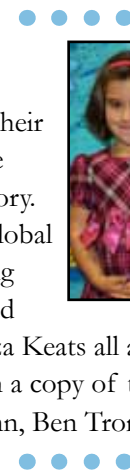
UCSI eleventh graders Alec DeLeon and Samantha Johnston are creating a public service announcement as part of their Multi-Media studies.

day at UCSI in a rigorous, thematic curriculum of integrated mathematics, English language arts and core technical classes.

UCSI allows students to show their learning in a way that is comfortable for them. For instance, after studying Harper Lee's "To Kill a Mockingbird," a Multi-Media student summarized what he learned by created a video game based on each of the book's chapters. Another wrote an alternate ending to Lee's novel.



Moving to the upper grades, students will progress into higher level learning geared to their specific career goals.



Points of Pride

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or higher on all exams and 3 or higher on five or more exams.

Utica High School junior David Smellie earned a perfect score on the ACT while still a sophomore.

Four local Kiwanis clubs provided backpacks stuffed with school supplies to nearly 500 needy UCS elementary students. Costco donated the backpacks. The Kiwanis also supply dictionaries to all UCS third graders and provide college scholarships for deserving district graduates.

The Eisenhower, Henry Ford II, Stevenson and Utica High school bands each earned a Division I rating at the Michigan School Band and Orchestra Association Marching Band Festival.

Reporting on the district's 2009-2010 budget audit, Plante and Moran, PLLC auditors said that UCS has again earned strong grades for meeting accounting standards used to measure financial practices, including standards required by federal stimulus funding and other grants.

Seventeen UCS students received recognition in the prestigious National Merit Scholarship Competition based on their achievement on the Preliminary SAT test:

National Merit Commended students are Patrick Austin, David Cinquegrani, Reed Cunningham, Samuel Gracik, Jonathan Horton, Elizabeth Fisk, Adam Pfeiffer, Justin Rucinski, Scott Rucinski and Rebecca Wolyniec.

National Merit Semifinalists are Ryan Boe, Mark Cinquegrani, Megan Cole, Alexander Coulter Maxwell Geisendorfer, Cameron Herringshaw and Joshua King.

Of the more than 1.5 million students who enter the competition, only about 34,000 – the top five percent – are designated as Commended Scholars.

The highest scorers, fewer than one percent or roughly 16,000 students, qualify as National Merit Semifinalists, advancing to the Finalist level of competition for scholarship awards.

Stevenson senior Amanda Gardiner capped her prep career with a fourth appearance in the Michigan High School Athletic Association Girls Golf Division I State Final, where she finished fifth overall.

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Starting in third grade, we've implemented the national STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) initiatives to further engage students in real-world applications for these vital areas of study.

Lego Robotics teams and competitions are fueling a growing interest in math and science among younger students, as well as sparking creativity, teamwork and responsibility.

Our highly successful FIRST Robotics ThunderChickens and Crevolution programs and the UCS Technical Underwater Robotics Research Engineering Team (TURRET) have the same impact at the high school level.

Georgetown's predictions for Michigan's transition are already starting to take shape. The resurgence and redesign of the U.S. auto industry signal a coming need for highly trained personnel. This is particularly true in our own back yard, with recently announced reinvestments in Chrysler's Sterling Heights Assembly Plant and the Ford Van Dyke Transmission and Steering Axle plants.

While this is great news, experts say Michigan's new economy can no longer rely solely on manufacturing. To meet this challenge, we must also prepare students for careers in diversified fields such as technology, alternative energy, medical innovation, information systems and others we can only imagine.

We can glimpse our state's brighter and broader future in business- and jobs-building projects such as the Macomb-Oakland University Incubator, part of the Technology Advancement Smart Zone in Sterling Heights.

As our Reaching Higher mission states, we engage the entire community to focus on every child's achievement. That means we partner not only with parents in their children's education, but with colleges and universities and business and industry to keep relevance in UCS classrooms.

Great examples are the business leaders who belong to the district's Career and Technical Education Business Advisory Group recently honored by the Board of Education.

The Board and I salute these individuals who give their time and expertise in working with UCS teachers to assure our Career and Technical Education

curriculum is current and aligned to changing industry standards.

Utica Community Schools is on a mission to prepare every child for the new Michigan and its economic future. With continued parent and community support, it is a mission we can all achieve.

In closing, I invite our community to attend the UCS Academic Blitz on February 3, where you will hear from UCS alumni and college representatives about early planning and preparation for your child's success in 2018 and long after.

View the Georgetown study at <http://cew.georgetown.edu/jobs2018/>

SAVE THE DATE –

Utica Community Schools
4th annual **ACADEMIC**

7-9 p.m. Thursday
FEBRUARY 3, 2011
Henry Ford II High School



All UCS 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th & 10th graders & their parents are invited

Start your Game Plan now for success after high school!

10 20 30 40 50 40 30 20 10

Foundation supports students in UCS College Culture



At the Oct. 25 Board of Education meeting, representatives from the Utica Community Schools Foundation for Educational Excellence (UCSFEE) presented the district with a \$19,000 check for the Superintendent's Scholarship Fund—money raised at the Foundation's Arts & Idols Gala last May. Eight deserving UCS graduates of 2010 were inaugural scholarship recipients. Scholarships funded from this latest donation will be awarded in the spring.

On hand to celebrate the donation were UCSFEE trustee Stephen Truman, UCS administrative services director Patricia Gonser, Board of Education members Jennifer Prybys, Daniel Meyers and Dr. Robert Ross, Board of Education treasurer Carl Territo, president Dr. Carol Klenow and vice president Gene Klida, UCSFEE president Brent Bohlinger, superintendent Dr. Christine Johns, UCSFEE

vice president Roy Rose, UCS teachers Susan Rosso, Josephine Braun and Nancy L. Smith and UCS director of elementary programs Lisa Rivard.

Dr. Johns expressed special thanks to Gene Klida for her hard work as Arts & Idols committee chairperson, and to Ms. Rivard, Ms. Gonser, Ms. Rosso, Ms. Braun and Ms. Smith, who were instrumental in the event's success.

Mark your calendar for the third annual Arts & Idols Gala, set for Thursday, May 12, 2011 at the Palazzo Grande Banquet and Event Center in Shelby Township. Auditions for adult singing "idols" 18-118 years old will be held Saturday, January 8 at the Palazzo Grande from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Call 586.797.6953 for audition and ticket information.

2010 – 2011 UCS District Calendar

DECEMBER 22 – JANUARY 2

No school – Holiday break

JANUARY 3

Classes resume

JANUARY 17

No school –
Martin Luther King Day

JANUARY 19

Secondary half day –
secondary exams

JANUARY 20 and 21

Half days for all students –
secondary exams

FEBRUARY 1 – 11

Elementary conference window

FEBRUARY 21 – 25

No school – Mid-winter break

FEBRUARY 25

No school – staff
professional development

MARCH 1 – 11

Secondary conference window

MARCH 1 – 3

High School ACT/MME exam

APRIL 4 – 8

No school – Spring break

APRIL 22

No school

MAY 27

No school – staff
professional development

MAY 30

No school – Memorial Day

JUNE 14

Secondary half day –
secondary exams

JUNE 15

Secondary half day –
secondary exams

JUNE 16

Last day for students –
half day for all –
secondary exams

Notice of Nondiscrimination

In compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the Elliot-Larsen Civil Rights Act and the Persons with Disabilities Civil Rights Act, it is the policy of Utica Community Schools that no person shall, on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin or ancestry, sex, age, disability, height, weight, or marital status be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination during any instructional opportunities, programs, services, job placement assistance, employment or in policies governing student conduct and attendance. Any person suspecting a discriminatory practice should contact the Executive Director of Human Resources at Utica Community Schools, 11303 Greendale, Sterling Heights, MI 48312 or call (586) 797-1000.



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